

History of the SENATE SEALS

A HISTORY OF THE SEALS
USED BY THE SENATE OF THE
UNITED STATES



1804–1952

PRESENTED BY MR. SALTONSTALL

July 4 (Legislative Day, June 27), 1952

Ordered to be printed with illustrations

History of the
SENATE REELS

REPORT OF THE
COMMISSIONER OF THE
GENERAL LAND OFFICE
TO THE SENATE

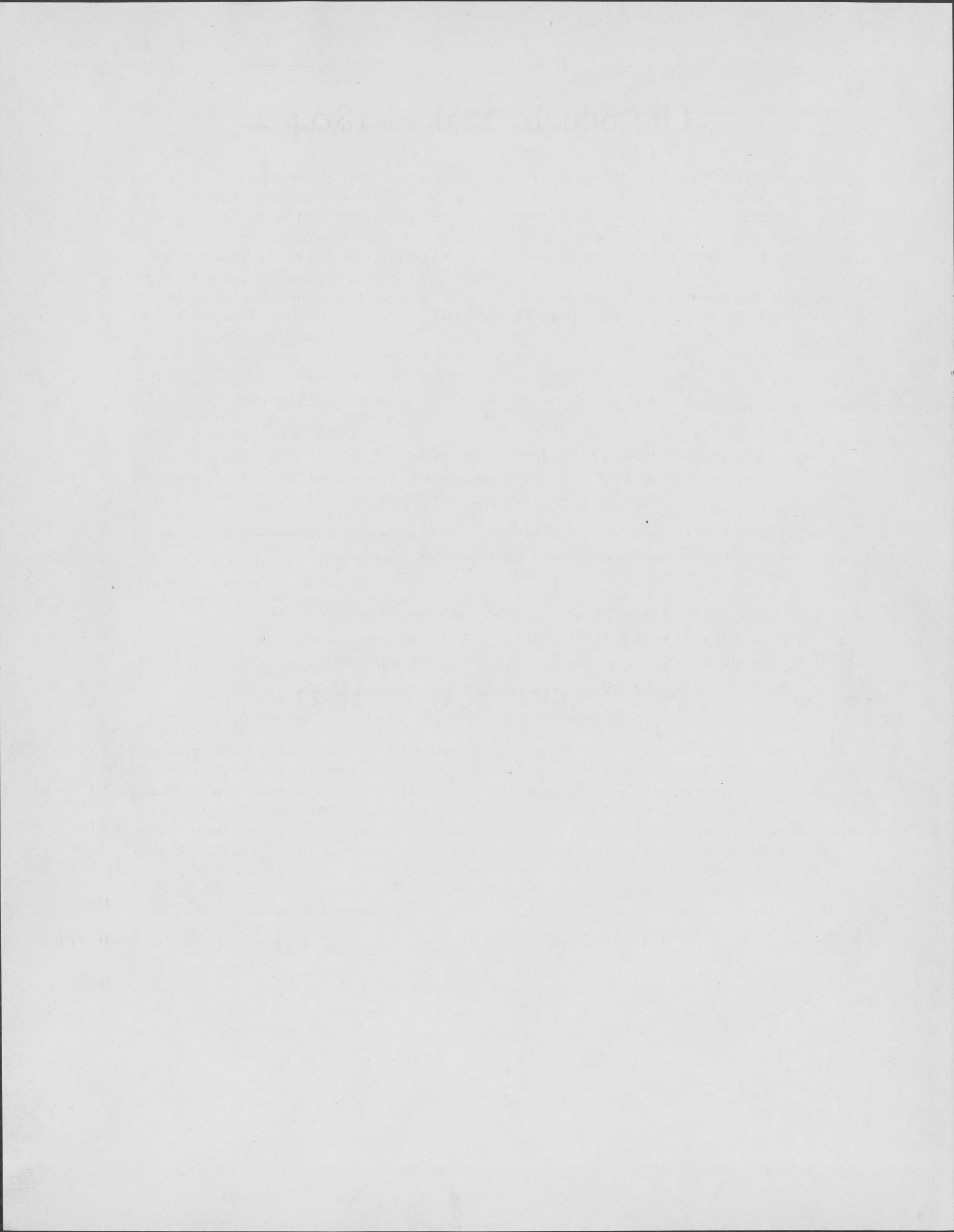
IN
RESPONSE TO A
RESOLUTION OF THE
SENATE PASSED
MAY 10, 1893

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Foreword

Seals have been used from time immemorial to authenticate important writings, particularly legal or governmental documents. Men devote their lives to the study of sphragistics and thereby add to the knowledge of past civilizations. Individual seals are less common than they were in times of gross illiteracy, when some distinctive feature was needed to authenticate a man's "mark". Frequently a seal is designed as an epitome of national ideals, and in matters of government the formality of using a seal is likely to long endure.

The following account is based mainly upon data gathered by Mr. Emery L. Frazier, Chief Clerk of the Senate, including notations and memoranda supplied him by Messrs. Joseph M. Whelan and Thomas C. Williams of the Senate Library Staff. It has seemed generally unnecessary and has been often impossible to go beyond the information so diligently assembled by the office of the Secretary of the Senate.



The Senate Seal of 1804

The earliest example known of the use of a distinctive seal by the United States Senate is in connection with the impeachment trial of Judge John Pickering in 1804. It appears for instance on the impeachment summons. From a photograph of this very imperfect impression it is evident that this seal, like so many other Government seals, was based on the Seal of the United States. In the photograph this seal is $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter, but it is possible that the picture has been slightly enlarged. The central figure is the eagle with what is probably a bundle of arrows in its sinister talon.

It has been suggested by some who have studied this seal that in this instance the Senate, lacking a seal of its own, obtained the use of the Seal of the United States. But this does not seem likely. Although the Great Seal of the United States was in use as early as 1782, and before the adoption of the Constitution was the Seal of Congress, and was at first in the custody of Charles Thomson, the Secretary of Congress, yet by 1804 the use of the Great Seal was sufficiently defined by law and custom to make its use by the Senate very improbable. Furthermore,

a careful inspection of the impression of the seal used by the Senate in 1804 demonstrates that it was not the Seal of the United States. Although there are some resemblances, distinct differences are discernible. The early seal of the Senate, instead of the well-known escutcheon on the breast of the eagle, has a spade shield much like that on the Seal of the President or on the old Treaty Seal of the United States. The photograph shows no scroll in the mouth of the eagle. Also, the Senate Seal has a legend around the border. Although only part of it is legible in the example studied, the words "THE UNITED STATES" are clearly recognizable. A vertical diameter would cut through the top border just after the E in THE. There is thus left at the beginning of the legend the correct space for the words SENATE OF. The obverse of the Seal of the United States has never had a legend around the border.¹ When this early Senate Seal was made, or by whom, is not known.

¹ United States Department of State, *The Seal of the United States*, how it was developed and adopted. Washington, D. C., Department of State, 1892, especially pp. 25-27, and plate facing p. 26.

The Senate Seal of 1831

Seals become worn and the impression is no longer clear. They also have a way of being lost or mislaid, especially if their necessary use is infrequent, as seems to have been the case with the Senate Seal in much of the nineteenth century.²

How long the seal which was extant in 1804 was used or was usable has not been discovered, but about the year 1831 an entirely new design was adopted. By whose authority this was done is not altogether clear. The new seal was designed by R. G. Lanphier,³

² Senate Report No. 48, 49th Congress, 1st Session.

³ Called R. P. Lamphear, Jr., in Senate Report No. 48, 49th Congress, 1st Session, and this repeated, without the "Jr." in the *National Geographic Magazine*, July 1946, p. 37. But the contemporary manuscript correspondence, regarding the making of the seal and financial records of payment for the seal, confirm the spelling R. G. Lanphier.

a visiting French artist, resident in Washington at the time; and the press and counter seal were made by Edward Stabler, of "Harewood," Sandy Spring, Montgomery County, Maryland. An old account of contingent expenses of the Senate shows that on 5 December 1831, R. G. Lanphier was paid \$200 for seal; and E. Stabler was paid \$101.62 for press. The Senate Library has correspondence from Stabler to Lanphier, and between Stabler and William Hickey, the Chief Clerk of the Senate, who appears to have handled the matter of the seal for the Senate.

Mr. Stabler was postmaster at Sandy Spring from 1830 until his death in 1883, being known as the oldest postmaster in the United States in point of service. Besides being a practical farmer and a writer

on agricultural subjects, he became one of America's foremost makers of Government seals and of dies and presses for such seals, Federal, State, and municipal. The seal presses were made in his own shop and each new venture at seal engraving or die sinking was accepted as a welcome challenge and was executed with well deserved satisfaction and pride. Mr. Stabler is said to have made the seals for the House of Representatives, the Seal of the President, those for the State, Treasury, Post Office, and Interior Departments, Patent Office, Land Office, United States Supreme Court, United States Court of Claims, circuit courts, and many others.⁴

The Senate Seal of 1831, prepared for use by Lanphier and Stabler, was used for more than 30 years, appearing at least as late as the impeachment summons of Judge West Hughes Humphreys in 1862. The seal was then so worn that parts of the complex design could not be identified from the impression.⁵ It must have been soon afterward that the seal was laid away and forgotten. For in 1880 when John C. Burch, the then Secretary of the Senate, found it "tucked away among some rubbish in one of the subterranean rooms of the Capitol," some of the older Senators were surprised that there was such a seal.⁶

When a new Senate Seal was being advocated in 1885, the old seal of 1831 was considerably disparaged. Senator William P. Frye, of Maine, remarked: "The Senate is without any official seal. There is only a legend of one, three women very slightly clothed, but it is only a legend."⁷

A Senate report of the time quotes the statement of a Mr. Wagner, a wood engraver of York, Pennsylvania:

*"The seal of the Senate is not what it ought to be for the money it cost. The figures are very awkward, especially the middle one, which appears to be falling over. The drapery is very stiff and too scanty a pattern of it."*⁸

The report, submitted by Senator John James Ingalls, of Kansas, continued:

*"No one has yet ever discovered what these figures were intended to typify, or what relevancy they had to the United States Senate or its proceedings."*⁹

Some of this criticism was unjustified. The symbolism was evidently intended to be so obvious that explanation would be superfluous. The various emblems on the seal appropriately represent well-known United States governmental ideals. An exclusive appropriation of such ideals to the Senate is hardly to be expected. The inscription "Senate U. States," is sufficiently definite.

It is safe to assume that the three women comprising the most noticeable feature of the seal were not intentionally prophetic of a time when women should be elected to the Senate. Rather they are goddesses representing Freedom, Justice, and Power. The statement of the Senate report already referred to, "No one has yet ever discovered what these figures were intended to typify", has been echoed by others, but such a statement is the mystery—not the significance of the figures.

The central goddess is standing on a low platform on which is the date 4 July 1776. She holds in her right hand a pole with a "liberty cap" on it. In her left hand she has a palm branch of victory and rejoicing, and an unrolled scroll with the inscription "Constitution, March 4, 1789." This inscription is not apparent on late impressions of the seal, but is vouched for by those who have seen early impressions.¹⁰ The criticism that this middle figure "appears to be falling over" is based on careless observation. She has her weight on her left foot and is depicted in the act of walking, with the right foot just ready to leave the ground, only the toe touching. It is not Freedom at rest, or stationary, but Freedom in progress, Freedom "going places", Freedom on the march.

Some of the lack of understanding of this seal may be owing to a very imperfect picture of it which appeared in the New York *Daily Graphic*, March 26, 1885. In this printed reproduction, the scroll in the hand of Freedom is unrecognizable, the date "4 July 1776" is missing, as are also the balances

⁴ The New York Daily Graphic, July 15, 1885, p. 101.

⁵ Photograph in the office of the Clerk of the Senate.

⁶ The New York Daily Graphic, March 26, 1885.

⁷ Congressional Record, vol. 17, p. 96.

⁸ Senate Report No. 48, 49th Congress, 1st Session.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid. and photographic copies of impressions of this seal in the office of the Clerk of the Senate.

from the hand of Justice. In the imprint of the seal the female figure at the right of the central goddess (at the viewer's left) is holding a pair of balances above her head, with the balance pans coming down to the level of her shoulders. They are the typical balances always shown with the goddess of Justice (the old Roman *Justitia*). But the picture in the *Daily Graphic* shows no pair of balances at all, but leaves the woman's empty hand waving above her head in what appears to be a gesture of mirth or salutation. In the seal Justice is leaning her left arm upon the fasces—the bundle of rods which was the old Roman badge of magisterial authority.

At the left of Freedom (to the viewer's right) is Power, a goddess with a sword in her right hand and

the caduceus in her left. In modern times the caduceus is the symbol of commerce and peace. Its use by the medical profession need not concern us here. It may have been a bold and original idea to let one goddess represent Power of both war and peace (commerce), but the meaning is plain that both kinds of power accompany Freedom.

An eagle is flying over Freedom's head, and near the bottom of the seal is the word "Senate" and under that, "U. States".

An endless chain of equal links forms the inner part of the seal's border. In this chain there are exactly twenty-four links—the number of States in the Union in 1831, when this seal was made.¹¹

¹¹ Ibid.

Lesser Seals

Expense accounts and memoranda preserved in the Office of the Secretary of the Senate indicate that in the early part of the nineteenth century small desk seals or seal stamps were purchased, ranging in price from 75 cents to \$1.75. They were evidently simple devices of a general nature for use when sealing correspondence with wax, as the custom was, and were probably not of an official character.

When the records show larger sums of money paid to professional seal makers, the transactions are more significant. There is an item for 12 December 1826, making a seal for Secy's Office, \$30, and 1 December 1828, Seal for Secy's Office, \$10. Then the French artist comes to notice again in the item, 5 December 1833, Lanphier, R. G., for making seals, \$22. Whether these seals followed existing patterns, or what their relation was to the regular Senate Seal, are

matters for which there seem to be no ready and certain answers.

There is more information concerning eight seals for which Edward Stabler was paid the sum of \$120 on 4 December 1847. Six of these were ordered to be designed like the old Senate Seal, with four of them lettered "Senate U. S. A.", and two to be lettered "Office Secretary Senate U. S. A." One was to be a representation of the arms of the United States for the use of the Senate, and another like it for the Office of the Secretary of the Senate. These seem to have been small letter seals which seem to be from this group made by Stabler in 1846-47.

The existence of another of these seals has been confirmed by Senator Leverett Saltonstall of Massachusetts, to whose wife it was given several years ago.

The Senate Seal of 1886

The seal now being used by the Senate was made in 1886 by Mr. Louis Dreka, of Philadelphia. It is 1½ inches in diameter. A Senate report of the time of its adoption states:

"The Committee on Rules, by resolution submitted March 21, and adopted March 31, 1885, was directed to procure a seal for the use of the Senate, the expenses of the same to be paid out of the contingent fund.

From designs and estimates of cost submitted by eminent artists and engravers in the principal cities of the country, the committee selected that of Louis Dreka, of Philadelphia, as the lowest in cost and the highest in artistic excellence. The device presents the cap of Liberty, the shield, with the Stars and Stripes, and the national motto, surrounded by the legend 'United States Senate'. It is engraved on steel, and was furnished with counter and press complete for \$35. The lowest estimate submitted by any other competitor was \$200."¹²

The lack of official instruction as to who should use the Senate Seal and under what circumstances had long been deplored. This need was met by the following resolution which was agreed to January 20, 1886:

"Resolved, That the Secretary shall have the custody of the seal, and shall use the same for the authentication of process transcripts, copies, and certificates whenever directed by the Senate; and may use the same to authenticate copies of such papers and docu-

¹² Senate Report No. 48, 49th Congress, 1st Session.

*ments in his offices as he may lawfully give copies of."*¹³

The seal is used to authenticate the credentials of Senators and the electoral votes for the President and Vice President. A painted facsimile decorates the ceiling of the office of the Secretary of the Senate, where, as it properly should be, it is one of the impressive features of the Capitol deserving the attention of every visitor. The seal itself is kept in a mahogany cabinet designed by the Chief Clerk of the Senate, Mr. Emery L. Frazier, whose interest in and watchful care of the seal have been in the finest of Senate traditions. The cabinet itself was built under the skilled direction of Mr. Tillman B. Huskey, chief cabinet-maker of the Senate, by Michael J. Vanni, and is one of the outstanding examples of its kind.

The Senate Seal is far more than a mere instrument of authentication. It is the sign and symbol of a freely elected deliberative body dedicated in its functioning to the continuance and preservation of the truly democratic way of life. May it ever remain so.

¹³ Congressional Record, vol. 17, p. 769.

Resolution and Report

The following resolution was adopted Mar. 31, 1885 (Record, p. 96): *"Resolved, That the Committee on Rules be directed to prepare an official seal for the Senate of the United States, and that the expenses of the same be paid out of the contingent fund."*

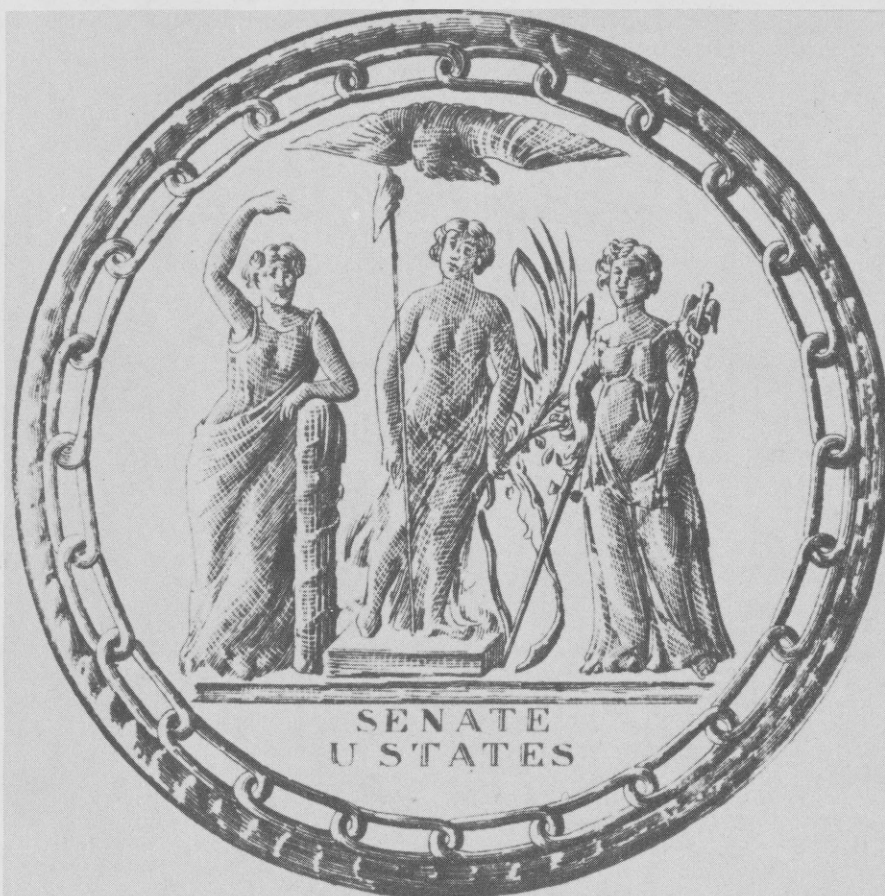
Senator Frye remarked: "The Senate is without any official seal. There is only a legend of one, three women very slightly clothed, but it is only a legend." (Record, vol. 17, p. 96, Mar. 31, 1885.)

Senator Ingalls, from the Committee on Rules, submitted the following report:

"The Committee on Rules, by resolution submitted March 21, and adopted March 31, 1885, was directed to procure a seal for the use of the Senate, the expenses of the same to be paid out of the contingent fund. From designs and estimates of cost submitted by emi-

nent artists and engravers in the principal cities of the country, the committee selected that of Louis Dreka, of Philadelphia, as the lowest in cost and the highest in artistic excellence. The device presents the cap of Liberty, the shield, with the Stars and Stripes, and the national motto, surrounded by the legend 'United States Senate.' It is engraved on steel, and was furnished with counter and press complete for \$35. The lowest estimate submitted by any other competitor was \$200.

"Careful examination of the Journals and archives of the Senate failed to disclose the history of the existing seal, or any authority for its use. It was left for an enterprising newspaper correspondent, who had become interested in governmental sphragistics, to discover that it was engraved about 1831, by Edward Stabler, postmaster at Sandy Spring, Md., from 1828



THE SEAL OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE.

A SEAL FOR THE SENATE.

In the Senate yesterday Mr. Frye, under instructions from the Committee on Rules, offered a resolution directing that committee to prepare an official seal for the Senate. It was adopted.—*Washington Sunday Paper, March 22.*

The resolution above noted was probably introduced not because Mr. Frye was ignorant of the fact that the Senate has a seal already, as it has long had, but because no law can now be found by any one connected with the Senate showing when that seal, of which we now present a copy, was authorized, or designating when it could or should be used. All connected with that seal, including the meaning of its de-

sign, is a mystery. It is known from old records that the Senate had a seal and used it during the trial of Judge Pickering of the State of New Hampshire in the year 1804, when it was affixed to certain documents necessary to be certified in that way, as for instance in auditing the accounts for the expenses of the trial. Very few Senators know that the Senate has a seal. While Secretary of the Senate in 1880 Colonel Burch found it tucked away among some rubbish in one of the subterranean rooms of the Capitol, and when the attention of some of the older Senators, including Senator Anthony, was called to it by the writer, who then secured an impression of the seal, they said they had never before seen or heard of it.

Exhibit 1. *The Daily Graphic, New York, Thursday, March 26, 1885*

to his death, in 1883. The device was designed by R. P. Lamphear, jr., a French artist, then resident in Washington. The correspondence has been preserved by the son of Mr. Stabler (Edward, jr.), now a citizen of Baltimore. In a letter written by Mr. Wagner, of York, Pa., a wood-engraver, to the elder Mr. Stabler

upon the subject of the seal engraved in 1831, he says:

"The seal of the Senate is not what it ought to be for the money it cost. The figures are very awkward, especially the middle one, which appears to be falling over. The drapery is very stiff and too scanty a pattern of it.

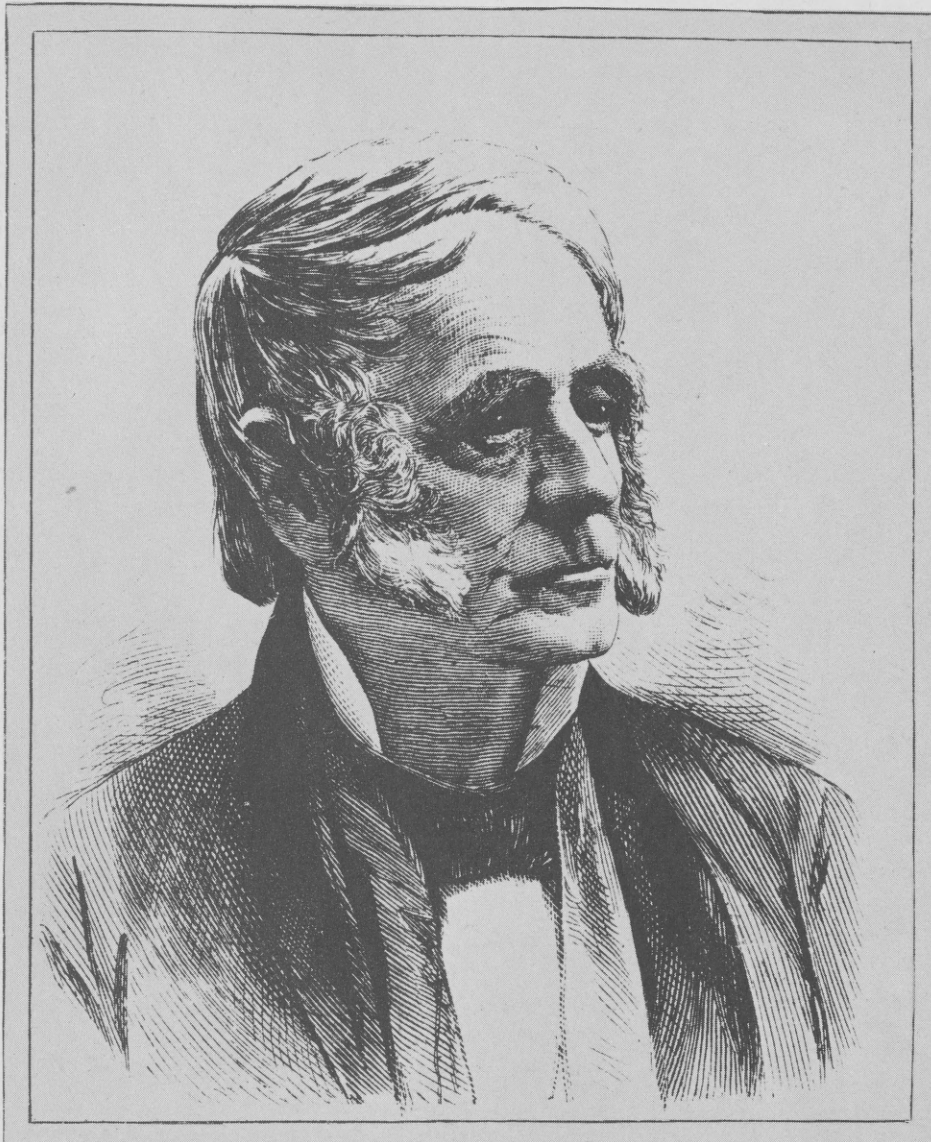


Exhibit 2. *The Senate Seal of 1831*

"No one has yet ever discovered what these figures were intended to typify, or what relevancy they had to the United States Senate or its proceedings. At the feet of the central figure are the words, 'July 4, 1776', and on a scroll at her right the words and figures, 'Constitution, March 4, 1789'. These inscriptions cannot be discerned on any impressions made within fifteen years from the old seal; but they are plainly legible on the original proof impression of Mr. Stabler, who has a very large collection of seals made by his father for various Departments at Washington, and for many of the State governments and

courts, together with all the original correspondence relating thereto * * *" (S. Rept. 48, 49th Cong., 1st sess.).

Pursuant to this report, the following resolution was agreed to Jan. 20, 1886: "*Resolved*, That the Secretary shall have the custody of the seal, and shall use the same for the authentication of process transcripts, copies, and certificates whenever directed by the Senate; and may use the same to authenticate copies of such papers and documents in his offices as he may lawfully give copies of." (Record, vol. 17, p. 769.)



THE LATE EDWARD STABLER, SR.

THE LATE EDWARD STABLER.

Readers of THE GRAPHIC who have read the articles on Government seals will be interested in the picture to-day given of the late Edward Stabler, who made most of those whose impressions THE GRAPHIC has published. He died in September, 1883, at the advanced age of eighty-nine years, at "Harewood," near Sandy Spring, Md., in the same house in which he was born, September 26, 1794. Mr. Stabler, before he became a seal engraver and "die sinker," was an author, and being a practical farmer wrote several essays on agriculture, for which prizes were awarded him—two by the Maryland State Agricultural Society, and another by the publisher of the *American Farmer* in 1848. The latter article, on the "Renovation of Worn-out Lands," has recently been republished. Self-taught he took up the business of "die sinking" and steel engraving to add to his income while farming, and having great talent for it soon built up a large and profitable business, receiving orders from all parts of the United States. He had the presses for the seals and dies made in his own shop at Harewood—the die-sinking in in cast steel, and the seal engraving in steel and bell metal, all being done by his own hands. Of the

seals used by the Government at Washington he made those of the President, July, 1850, those for the United States House of Representatives in 1831 and the press and counter seal in the same year for the seal of the Senate, the seals of State, Treasury, Post-office and Interior Departments, of the Patent Office, Land Office, United States Supreme Court, United States Court of Claims and the Circuit Courts throughout the country, the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia and that for the office of the Solicitor of the Treasury and that for the Smithsonian Institution, besides the official seals of the various States of the Union, including the great seal of the State of Missouri, and the seals of county clerks in many States and of banks. Mr. Stabler and his wife belonged to the "Society of Friends," and she lived until May, 1883. Hers was the first death in the family in fifty-nine years. All his children were living when Mr. Stabler died, two years ago. To one of his sons THE GRAPHIC is indebted for much valuable information about the seals heretofore published.

Mr. Stabler was known as the oldest postmaster in the United States in point of service. He had served continuously, retaining the same commission, from the time he was first appointed in 1800, when Jackson was President and Barry Postmaster-General, until his death in 1883.

Exhibit 3

Article on Edward Stabler, Sr.

Wrentham 1st Decr 1831
Respect^l friend
D. J. Sanphier

I can now state more particularly as to the time in which I could furnish a Press, than when in Washington - As impressions from other seals, may be occasionally be desired, I would recommend the Sew-Press with my construction of slide and adjustment - this I can furnish (without the interference of sickness or other equally potent cause) during the present session of Congress - It will be quite a different article from any thing of the kind in the district; both as regards efficiency, and workmanship - Enclosed is an impression, and a fair sample of the work, from such a press as I propose to furnish - I will warrant every impression equal to the sample, if made on paper, but not on parchment - perhaps it may be done equally well in the latter material, but I cannot speak from experience - If it can be done with any press, it can with this - If one should be engaged for each house, at the same time, I think I could afford them a little more - and but a little -

My Sew Press could not be used to advantage with any but the seals it is made for - Would it not answer

HAREWOOD
1st mo 1st. 1831

Respected friend
R. G. LANPHIER

I can now state more particularly as to the time in which I could furnish a press, than when in Washington. As impressions from other seals, may occasionally be desired, I would recommend the screw press with my construction of slide and adjustment—this I can furnish (without the interference of sickness or other equally potent cause) during the present session of Congress. It will be quite a different article from anything of the kind in the district; both as regards efficiency, and workmanship. Enclosed is an impression and a fair sample of the work; from such a press as I propose to furnish. I will warrant every impression equal to the sample if made on paper, but not on parchment. Perhaps it may be done equally well on the latter material, but I cannot speak from experience. If it can be done with any press, it can with this. If one should be engaged for each house, at the same time. I think I could afford them a little lower—and but a little.

all prepared to use the small press Mr. Hickey already has,
for the seals, and have the Press for the large seal permanently
fixed for that alone? - It would then be a perfect article, and
each impression would be fair and perfect to the most minute
part - I took the enclosed impression from a seal not
intended to be used in this press - consequently there was ^{no} ~~not~~
matrix used on the impression would be finer -

Ⓔ This is not the impression I first intended sending - on
examination I find but one of that kind, and as it might get
injured by sending in a letter, I concluded to retain it in my
collection - However this is as good as any thing that can
send me from the District, I suspect; For the Honour of the
thing, I should like to do a little work for Uncle Sam, but
he must recollect that he cannot purchase a patent Lever
watch for the same price he would pay for a strip of gold -

As I have but this impression from this seal,
please return it to me after making what use you think
proper of it - I did not engrave it, or I should have retained
a number of impressions - I procured it just to obtain an imp-
ression for my collection of seals -

I am respectfully

Yours friend

Wm. Claiborne, Master
Sandy Spring
Va.

My lever press could not be used to advantage with any but the seal it is made for. Would it not answer all purposes to use the small press Mr. Hickey already has for other seals, and have the press for the large seal permanently fixed for that alone? It would then be a perfect article, and each impression would be fair and perfect to the most minute part. I took the enclosed impression from a seal not intended to be used in this press—consequently there was no matrice used or the impression would be finer.

This is not the impression I first intended sending—on examination I find but one of that kind, and as it might get injured by sending in a letter, I concluded to retain it in my collection. However this is as good as anything thee can send me from the District, I expect; for the *Honour* of the thing, I should like to do a little work for Uncle Sam, but he must recollect that he cannot purchase a patent lever watch for the same price he would pay for a Swiss virge.

As I have but this impression from this seal please return it to me after making what use thee thinks proper of it. I did not engrave it, or I should have retained a number of impressions. I procured it just to obtain an impression for my collection of seals.

I am respectfully
thy friend

EDW. STABLER Jr. *Postmaster*
Sandy Spring, Md.

Deposited for
R. C. Vining

St. Louis 1st Feb. 1851

My favour of the 10th Inst. is just at hand -
I cannot agree to the conditions annexed to my proposal -
although the greatest care will be taken of the seal, my profits
will ^{not} justify such an insurance; as to be responsible so far as to replace
it by a new one in case of injury - I apprehend no danger whatever to it -
none ever yet sustained any in my hands - If the understanding is, as
to the safety of the deposit, I will ^{give} a guarantee in any form that
pleases, with endorsing as unexceptionable as any in the District -

It is highly probable the work can be completed within
thirty days, but I am afraid to contract positively for that period,
as you may be disappointed - Since I wrote to R. Lauchlin, there
has been a most unexpected change; in the closing of the navigation, &
indeed, ^{thence} the entrance by land - To have the work as perfect as
possible I should have the sewer cut in Philad.^a and from the
causes just alluded to, some delay might occur - If 30 or even 60 days
is a sin qua non, for its delivery, I must decline it - My best
excuses would be used to do the work in the best, possible time,
and it should be finished in the most superior manner, even if it
requires 90 days - My correspondent in Philad.^a writes, that the
order will be delivered in two weeks from the time of receiving the
order - from present appearances it might require two more, to get
it there - indeed it will now be 10 days before I can hear from
there, and place my order there -

Under these circumstances the Secretary of
the Senate is willing to give me the work (I know it is to your
interest to do it whether the operation is entitled, or not) please advise
me by return of mail; and request R. L. to return me a piece of

Exhibit 6. Correspondence

*Tin of the exact diameter of the seal, and state its thickness—this
by the same mail—I should not want the seal for 2 or 3 weeks—
I am very respectfully
Thy Friend
Edw. G. Stabler, Jr.*

HAREWOOD 1st mo. 15th 1831

Respected friend

W. HICKEY

Thy favour of the 10th inst. is just at hand. I cannot agree to the conditions annexed to my proposals. Although the greatest care will be taken of the seal, my profits will not justify such an insurance; as to be responsible so far as to replace it by a new one in case of injury. I apprehend no danger whatever to it—none ever yet sustained any in my hands. If the understanding is, as to the *safety of the deposit*, I will give a guarantee in any sum thee pleases, with endorsers as unexceptionable as any in the District.

It is highly probable the work can be completed within thirty days, but I am afraid to contract positively for that period, as you may be disappointed. Since I wrote to R. Lanphier, there has been a most unexpected change; in the closing of the navigation and indeed almost, the intercourse by land. To have the work as perfect as possible I should have the screw cut in Philadelphia and from the causes just alluded to, some delay might occur. If 30 or even 60 days is a *sinequanon*, for its delivery, I must deliver it. My best exertions would be used to do the work in the shortest possible time, and it *should be finished in the most superior manner even if it required 90 days*. My correspondent in Philadelphia writes, that the screw will be delivered in two weeks from the time of receiving the order—from present appearances it *might* require two more to get it here—indeed it will now be ten days before I can hear from thee, and place my order there.

If under these circumstances the Secretary of the Senate is willing to give me the work (I know it is to your interest to do it, whether the assertion is credited, or not.) please advise me by return of mail; and request R. L. to enclose me a piece of tin of the exact diameter of the seal, and state its thickness—this by the same mail—I should not want the seal for two or three weeks.

I am very respectfully

Thy Friend

EDW. G. STABLER, Jr.



Exhibit 7. *The Seal used in the Senate 1804*

Seals of the Senate

The seal now being used by the Senate was made in 1886 by Mr. Louis Dreka of Philadelphia. The seal shows a liberty cap, the shield with stars and stripes, cross fasces, laurel and oak leaves, and the national motto. The seal is engraved on steel and was furnished complete with counter and press for thirty-five dollars. (See title page.) Prior to 1886 the Senate Seal was a legend, as remarked Senator William P. Frye of Maine when he submitted the resolution authorizing a new seal.

In the course of the research it was found that the Senate Seal of 1831 was not a myth as was reported, but rather a reality. (See exhibits 1 and 2.) What the figures on the seal are to represent remains a mystery. It was found that the seal was little used and that many Senators were ignorant of the fact of its existence.

The Senate Seal of 1831 was designed by a Mr. R. G. Lanphier, who is identified only by the fact that he was a visiting French artist resident in Washington at the time. There is, however, more information concerning the gentleman who made the press and the counter seal for the Senate. He was Mr. Edward Stabler, of Harewood, Sandy Spring, Maryland. Mr. Stabler was postmaster at Sandy Spring. He was known as the oldest postmaster in the United States in point of service, having served from 1830 until his death in 1883. (See exhibit 3.) Mr. Stabler made the seals for the House of Representatives, the Seal of the President, those for the State, Treasury, Post Office and Interior Departments, Patent Office, Land Office, United States Supreme Court, United States Court of Claims, circuit courts, and many others.

The Senate Library has correspondence from Stabler to Lanphier, and from Stabler to Mr. William Hickey, Chief Clerk of the Senate. Mr. Hickey, it appears, handled the matter of the seal for the Senate. (See exhibit 8.)

The New York Daily Graphic, in 1885, ran a series of articles on the various seals. In one of the articles they refer to a seal used by the Senate in 1804. (See exhibit 7.) There is an enlarged photograph of this particular seal and it appears that it is the Great Seal of the United States, however, it is not at all clear. In addition to the above references and correspondence, the Senate Library has secured a copy of a letter from W. Hickey to Stabler, dated November 6, 1846, requesting some letter seals and a copy of a letter from Stabler to Mr. A. Dickens, Secretary of the Senate, regarding these seals. The Senate Library has impressions of three that answer the description of the seals mentioned in the above correspondence. There are entries in the ledgers of the Senate Disbursing Office, dated 1809, for hand seals which may also be the small seal impressions that are in possession of the Senate Library.

Much time was spent on the research regarding the Senate Seals. Every known channel of information was investigated, to wit, Mr. Emery L. Frazier, Chief Clerk of the Senate, and Mr. Joseph M. Whelan, formerly a member of the Senate Library staff, made a trip to Ashton, Maryland, to confer with members of Mr. Stabler's family. It was during this trip that the information regarding the hand seals of the Senate was found.

Office Secretary Senate U. S.
January 10. 1834

Sir,

^{of the Artist}
(Your letter to W. Lanchier, has been handed to me for
perusal, and by me submitted to the Secretary of the Senate. —

The Secretary has concluded, from your earnest recommendation,
to adopt the screw press with your construction of slide and adjust-
ment. — This you ^{state} ~~may~~ can be furnished by you efficient in power
and perfect in construction; —, altogether superior to any thing
of the kind in the District; both as regards efficiency and work-
manship; and, in ~~your~~ ^{the} memorandum left me you say, that ^{you} ~~you~~
you can furnish it in about thirty days.

~~With the foregoing understanding~~ ^{of the}
^{of the} ~~case and upon those conditions~~ ^{terms stated by you} I am directed by the
Secretary to request you to commence the ^{execution of the} above mentioned
press immediately; which ^{will} allow until about the middle
of February for its completion and delivery. —

It is to be understood that you will be responsi-
ble for the seal itself from the time you receive it, until it
shall be delivered by you and one perfect impression ^{at least} made
with it in this Office; and that you will make good any
injury it may receive, either by repair or by furnishing a new
seal, as may be determined upon by three artists qualified to
judge. —

You will be pleased to acknowledge the receipt of
this letter as early as convenient.

I am resp^d

Exhibit 8. Correspondence

OFFICE SECRETARY SENATE US

January 10, 1831

SIR,

Your letter to Mr. Lanphier of the 1st inst has been handed to me for perusal, and by me submitted to the Secretary of the Senate.

The Secretary has concluded, from your earnest recommendation, to adopt the screw press with your construction of slide and adjustment. This you state can be furnished by you efficient in power and perfect in construction; altogether superior to anything of the kind in the District; both as regards efficiency and workmanship; and warrant every impression equal to the sample and with the matrice to be fixed on your press and in that memorandum left with me you say the impression will be finer that you can furnish it in about thirty days.

With the foregoing understanding of the case and upon those conditions and on the terms stated by you I am directed by the Secretary to request you to commence the execution of the above-mentioned press immediately; which will allow until about the middle of February for its completion and delivery.

It is to be understood that you will be responsible for the seal itself from the time you receive it, until it shall be delivered by you and one perfect impression at least made with it in this office and that you will make good any injury it may receive, either by repair or by furnishing a new seal, as may be determined upon by three artists qualified to judge.

You will be pleased to acknowledge receipt of this letter as early as convenient.

I am respectfully,

1st 22nd? I have opened the mail to day, that owing to the very great fall and drift of snow, we have lost a week, much, as our roads were literally impassable - Only on this account the answer to thy letter would have been sent a week earlier - It's delay, or rather the cause, yet was unlooked for by us all -

With respect to the insurance on the deal I will add, in addition to what I have already said, that your deal will be worth about about 25 to 50¢ - and I shall make but little, if any more than half of that sum on my paper - clear money - although there is not the least probability that it will sustain any injury, still I cannot avoid the risk with so little profit - In a pecuniary point of view I can but little about it; but I should like to furnish a pup that will do credit to the deal, and to the Legislature of our country - There is not a department under Government in the Dist. (and I have an impression from every seal from the Dep. of State down) that impresses any thing like a perfect seal impression of this deal -

There has been an unexpected delay of nearly one third of the 30 days, and if I had made the engagement you would certainly have been disappointed & from causes not within the control of any one -

I have the offer of another Pup & make but shall wait thy answer before I undertake it, as you will have the preference, and it will be my pleasure & interest to deliver it at the earliest possible period to make room for this -

Respectfully

Yours &c

Mr. Stubbins

Exhibit 9. Correspondence

1st mo. 22nd

I have opened the mail to day, that owing to the very great fall and drift of snow, we have lost a weeks mail, as our roads were literally impassible—only on this account the answer to thy letter would have been sent a week earlier. This delay, or rather the cause of it was overlooked for by us all.

With respect to the insurance on the seal I will add, in addition to what I have already said, that your seal will be worth about 45 to 50\$—and I shall make but little, if any more than half of that sum on my press clear money—although there is not the least probability that it will sustain any injury, still I cannot incur the risk with so little profit—In a pecuniary point of view I care but little about it; but I should like to furnish a press that would do credit to the seal, and to the Legislature of our country—There is not a department under Government in the District (and I have an impression from every seal from the Dept. of State down) that issues anything like a perfect impression of this seal.

There has been an unexpected delay of nearly one third of the thirty days, and if I had made the engagement you certainly would have been disappointed from causes not within the control of anyone.

I have the offer of another Press to make but shall wait thy answer before I undertake it, as you will have the preference, and it will be my pleasure and interest to deliver it at the earliest possible period to make room for others.

EDW. G. STABLER, Jr.

Office Secy Senate

Washington, January 27, 1831

Sir,

Your letter of the 15th instant has been received.

The same has been submitted to the Secretary of the Senate and he has directed me to request you to commence the press as described in my last letter. - Your receipt for the seal when delivered to you, will be considered sufficient for the "safety of the deposit" as mentioned in your letter. - ~~It will be delivered to yourself, or your order at this Office, whenever you may desire, as it has been finished & delivered by Mr~~

Langfries. - When you are ready for the seal you may apply personally, or by order, to the Secretary of the Senate for it.

As the session is so far advanced it will not be expected that ~~you~~ the press be delivered before its termination, ~~and~~ and you can therefore take the time ^{that may be required} ~~necessary~~ for making it perfect, (without unnecessary delay). - Permit me to request you by next mail ~~that~~ to send me ~~some~~ ^{two or three} impressions from the largest & latest made seals ~~of which you~~ that ~~you~~ have been in your possession with the names of the artists by whom they were ^{respectively} made & their places of residence. -

I am, &c

W. A.

OFFICE SEC OF SENATE

January 27, 1831

SIR,

Your letter of the 15th instant has been received. The same has been submitted to the Secretary of the Senate and he has directed me to request you to commence the press as described in my last letter. Your receipt for the seal when delivered to you, will be considered sufficient for the "safety of the deposit" as mentioned in your letter. When, you are ready for the seal you may apply personally, or by order, to the Secretary of the Senate for it. As the session is so far advanced it will not be expected that the press be delivered before its termination, and you can therefore take the time that may be required for making it perfect, (without unnecessary delay). Permit me to request you by next mail to send me some two or three impressions from the largest and latest made seals that may have been in your possession with the names of the artists by whom they were respectively made and their places of residence.

I am,

W. H.

(1)

I Received 2nd Nov 4th 1861

Respect^l friend

W. Hickin

Thy favour of the 27th ult^o came by today's mail - I will immediately commence the proof, and if I possibly can do so, will deliver it previous to the expiration of the present Session of Congress.

Should nothing unexpected occur to occasion delay, I have some hopes that it may be accomplished -

Thy omitting to attend to the request in my last letter, will occasion some delay, should I not meet with an opportunity to the City by which I can speedily obtain the seal - I allude to the exact diameter and thickness of it - Should I not send an order forth by next Wednesday, the 9th Inst, will thou please enclose me by mail, a piece of stiff card of the exact diam. of the end, not engraved - also the thickness -

I would prefer tin, but the card will answer -

I have examined all my impressions & can only find the enclosed (6) whose names I can give - As the engravers do not generally attach their names to the seals, they we cannot identify them - I obtain them in almost every instance from the Office, & where the engravers are unknown -

No 2 & 4 are ^{supplied by} from B. Chambers, Washington City - I find ~~any~~ two of my first papers - No. 1, 3, & 5 are my own from the "stump" as our eastern brethren say - I should send others but presume for the reasons aforesaid, they will not answer thy purpose - These need not be returned, as they are

Exhibit 11. Correspondence

HAREWOOD 2nd mo. 4th, 1831

Respected friend

W. HICKEY

Thy favour of the 27th ulto. came by todays mail—I will immediately commence the press, and if I can possibly do so, will deliver it previous to the expiration of the present session of the Congress.

Should nothing unexpected occur to occasion delay, I have some hopes that it may be accomplished.

Thy omitting to attend to the request in my last letter, will occasion some delay, should I not meet with an oppty. to the City by which I can speedily obtain the seal—I allude to the exact diameter and thickness of it—Should I not send an order for it by next Wednesday, the 9th Inst., will thee please enclose me by mail apiece of stiff card of the *exact* diam. of the end, not engraved—also the thickness.

I would prefer tin, but the card will answer.

I have examined all my impressions and can only find the enclosed (6) whose names I can give—As the engravers do not generally attach their names to the seals we cannot identify them—I obtain them in almost every instance from the offices where the engravers are unknown—No. 2 and 4 are engraved by B. Chambers, Washington City—from two of my first presses—No. 1, 3, and 5 are my own from the “stump” as our eastern brethren say—I would send others but presume for the reasons assigned, they will not answer thy purpose—These need not be returned, as they were all taken off in adjusting the press, and are im-

all taken off in adjusting the press, and are imperfect—
 The impression from the Savings Bank, I wish to preserve
 as I have not other—My impression is, that it was engraved
 by Sands, Balt. who is deceased, if I recollect rightly
 No. 4 was engraved on Cast Steel—the others on brass—
 Please do not fail to send me the tin or card,
 If I do not send for the seal by the time mentioned—
 This information is necessary, in the first stage of
 the operation—
 I am very respectfully
 Wm. G. Stabler

N. B. I presume a new Press will be wanting in the
 House of Reps. Would there be any objection to suggest
 for me, to the Clerk, the propriety of suspending their purchase
 -all until yours is delivered and proved? If the request
 is improper in the slightest degree do not make it—

Exhibit 12. Correspondence—Continued

perfect—The impression from the Savings Bank, I wish to preserve as I have
 no other—My impression is, that it was engraved by Sands, Baltimore who is
 deceased, if I recollect it rightly. No. 4 was engraved on Cast Steel—the others
 on brass.

Please do not fail to send me the tin or card. If I do not send for the seal by
 the time mentioned.

This information is necessary, in the first stage of the operation.

I am very respectfully,

EDW. G. STABLER

N. B. I presume a new press will be wanting in the House of Represent-
 atives. Would there be any objection to suggest, for me, to the Clerk, the
 propriety of suspending their purchase until yours is delivered and proved?
 If the request is improper in the slightest degree do not make it.—

Respectful
 R. Lanphier

I have been very unexpectedly called
 to Alex.^a and if possible will return here this evening.
 It will be out of my power to call in person for the
 seal, and will thank thee to see Wm. Hickey & procure it,
 by the time I return from Alex.^a - I do not wish to trust
 it in the hands of others, and shall not be in town again
 previous to delivering the Pap^r - If received, please have
 this note as an acknowledgment of its reception -

Edw. G. Stabler Jr.

Washington 5 day Morning

Exhibit 13. Correspondence

Respected friend
 R. LANPHIER

I have been very unexpectedly called to Alexandria and if possible will return here this evening.

It will be out of my power to call in person for the seal, and will thank thee to see Wm. Hickey & procure it by the time I return from Alexandria. I do not wish to trust it in the hands of others, and shall not be in town again previous to delivering the press. If received, please have this note as an acknowledgement of its reception.

EDW. G. STABLER JR.

Washington 5 day Morning
 (5 Feb. 1831)

(15)

J. Hammond Am. 19th 31

Respectfully
W. Hickey

For fear the secretary of the
Senate may think the Rep too long on hand
I request he may be informed, that it is just
completed, except the drying of the paint and one
or two little finishings that will be ready by the
same time. - Should nothing unexpected occur
to prevent, I shall deliver the article by the last
of the ensuing, or beginning of the following month.

Please have the table ready this week -
Two and an half feet square will be large enough
as the bar is about 27 or 8 inches long -

Did you see Mr. St. Clair Clarke & Co.
respecting his Rep? I hope so, for I would
not take the trouble I have, without the prospect
of furnishing same - I am very respectfully

Yours truly
J. H. Hickey

Exhibit 14. Correspondence

HAREWOOD
3rd mo. 19th '31

Respected friend
W. HICKEY

For fear the Secretary of the Senate may think the press too long on hand I request he may be informed, that it is just completed, except the drying of the paint and one or two little finishings that will be ready by the same time;—should nothing unexpected occur to prevent, I shall deliver the article by the last of the ensuing, or beginning of the following week.

Please have the table ready this week. Two and an half feet square will be large eno—as the lever is 27 or 8 inches long.

Did thee see Mr. St. Clair Clarke Esq. inspecting his press? I hope so, for I would not take the trouble I have without the prospect of furnishing

I am very respectfully

EDW. STABLER

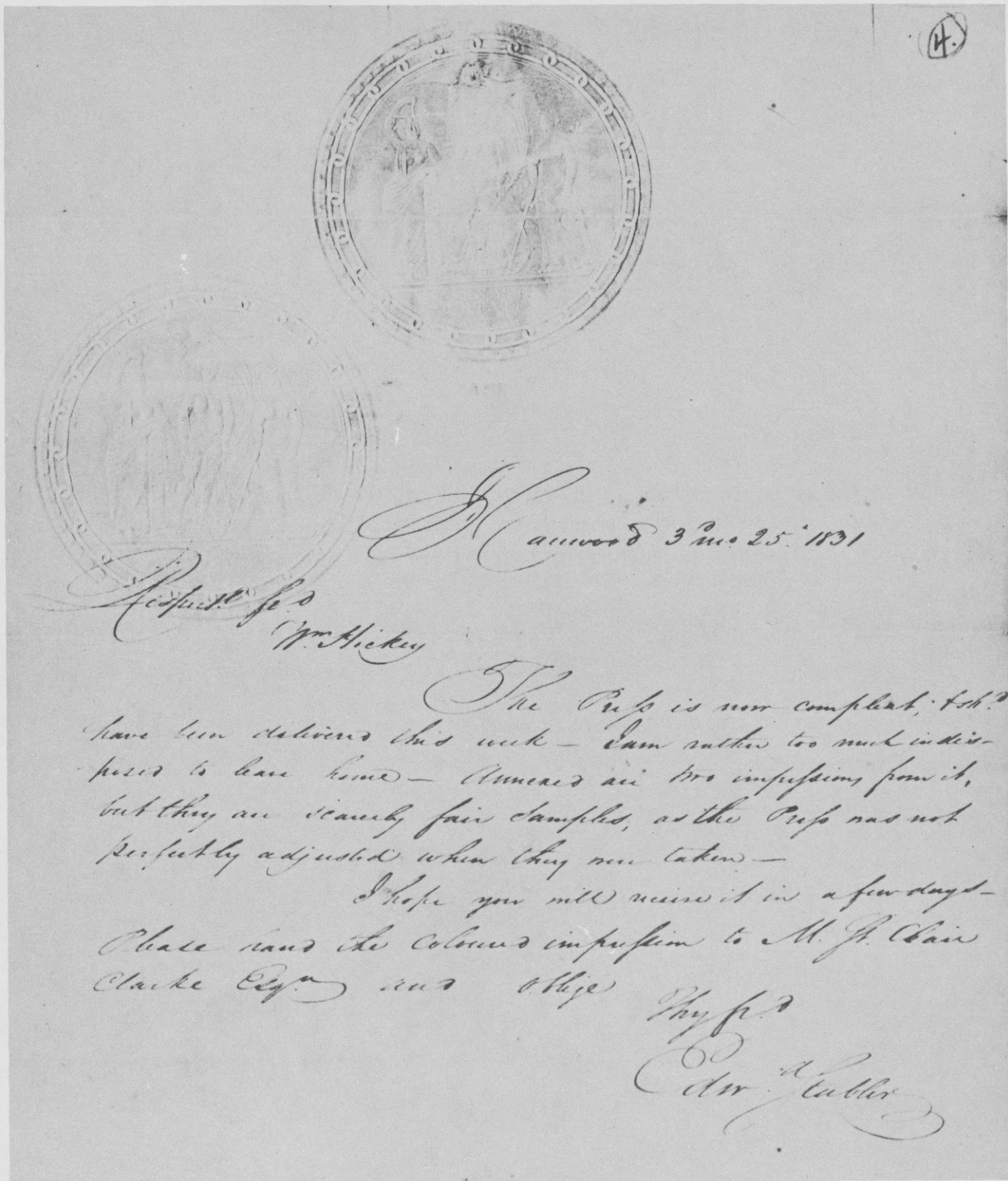


Exhibit 15. Correspondence

HAREWOOD *3rd mo. 25, 1831*

Respected friend
WM. HICKEY

The press is now compleat, and should have been delivered this week—I am rather too much indisposed to leave home—Annexed are two impressions from it, but they are scarcely fair samples, as the press was not perfectly adjusted when they were taken—


I hope you will receive it in a few days—Please hand the colored impression to M. St. Clair Clarke Esquire and oblige

Thy friend

EDW. G. STABLER

If the table or stand is not already made, I would say, that it will hardly be necessary to have any projection from the sides, as ^{now} proposed—even if the same situation should be preferred—

The top should be about 2 inches thick, and the legs, 2½ to 3 inches square—it would be better to have a brace near the foot of each leg, thus—

 It may be made as neat as you please for the Press shall be worthy of the best you can procure—

By the above remarks, I suppose the stand yet to be made—
E. G. S.

Exhibit 16. Correspondence

If the table or stand is not already made, I would say, that it will hardly be necessary to have any projection from the sides, as now proposed—even if the same situation should be preferred—

The top should be about two inches thick, and the legs, 2½ to 3 inches square—it would be better to have a brace near the foot of each leg, thus—

It may be made as neat as you please for the Press shall be worthy of the best you can procure—

By the above remarks, I suppose the stand yet to be made—

EGS

Compound Lever

I will furnish a complete press of from 15 to 20,000 (twenty thousand) pounds, power used at pleasure, for \$50 if made at leisure.

I do not think it could be furnished in less than two months—If greater power is wanted the size of the press would necessarily be increased, by making new patterns and the price would be in proportion—

I can furnish a screw press of the first quality, equally efficient and perfect for \$100 at a shorter notice—viz 30 days

Edw. G. Stabler
Sandy Spring P. Office
Montgomery Co. Md.

Exhibit 17. Correspondence

I will furnish a complete compound lever press of from 15 to 20,000 (twenty thousand) pounds, power used at pleasure, for \$50 if made at leisure.

I do not think it could be furnished in less time than two months—If greater power is wanted the size of the press would necessarily be increased, by making new patterns and the price would be in proportion.

I can furnish a screw press of the first quality, equally efficient and perfect for \$100 at a shorter notice—viz 30 days

EDW. G. STABLER, JR.

Sandy Spring P. Office
Montgomery County, Maryland

OFFICE SECRETARY OF THE SENATE U. S.

November 6, 1846

DEAR SIR,

As we had not the pleasure of seeing you here on the 2nd instant and the weather being still rainy and disagreeable, I have concluded that you had postponed your trip in consequence thereof, and think it better, as it may be sometime before you are able to come down to send your written directions concerning the seals as follows:

The Secretary wishes you to prepare six of your best hardened steel letter seals—rather smaller than the enclosed impressions of the seal of the Vice-President—the exterior to be *within* the circular ring of this seal.

The design to be precisely similar to that on the old seal two impressions of which I send you on a public document (to be carefully returned.)

The letter on four of the seals to be "Senate U. S. A."

The lettering on two of them to be "Office Secretary Senate U. S. A."

As soon as you complete and be pleased to send it, or an impression of it, to the secretary of the senate, in order that he may approve the form or shape of the design, or alter it, before a second is executed. He is anxious to get them by the meeting of Congress, if practicable.

Sincerely yours,

W. HICKEY

EDWARD STABLER, Esquire.

Exhibit 18. *Correspondence*

SANDY SPRING 12 3d 1846

Respectful Friend,
A. DICKENS

Enclosed are two or three impressions from the New Senate Seal also one of the old ones, returned for comparison.

The size of the new seal is rather smaller, including the border, than what Col. Hickey designated.

The border is a new idea that occurred to me at the time of turning the seal; and I think is the neatest for this purpose that I have seen. It gives a bold edge or margin to the impression and makes the seal stronger at that point, which is also the most liable to be defaced.

Please advise me *by return mail** if it is satisfactory, so that I may go on without delay and finish the others for the Senate.

I am very respectfully,

EDWARD STABLER

*which is made up at Washington on *Monday* evening.

These are Proof impressions—made to finish the seal by. The seal was retouched in several points; after making the enclosed impressions.

Exhibit 19. *Correspondence*

From a book marked "Memorandum" in the office of the Secretary of the Senate

UNITED STATES FOR CONTINGENT EXS. SENATE.

(Page 284)

	1808 (09?)		
Jan'y 15	To one desk seal.....		\$1.00
	16 (?) re'd sealg wax.....		1.75

(Page 285)

Feb 14	2½ lb. sufifine sealg wax 3.00.....		7.50
	1 seal for letters.....		.75

(Page 298)

Voucher			
1809			
Dec. 9	Senate of the United States to Edgar Patterson for one desk seal.....		1.25

(Page 299)

1810			
Feb'y 22	Senate of the United States to James Martin To a plate to a seal.....		.75

(Page 301)

1809			
To Daniel Rapine's acct. as follows:			
May 26	1 seal stamp.....		.75

From Miscellaneous Expenses, Contingent Expenses of the Senate

12 Dec. 1826, page 4:			
	Making a seal for Secy's office.....		\$30.00
1 Dec. 1828, page 2:			
	Seal for Secy's office.....		10.00
5 Dec. 1831, page 3:			
	Lanphier, R. G. for seal.....		200.00
	Stabler, E. for press.....		101.62
5 Dec. 1833, page 3:			
	Lanphier, R. G. for making seals.....		22.00
4 Dec. 1847, page 29:			
	Stabler, E. for 8 seals.....		120.00
	arms of United States, for Senate and Office of the Secy of Senate @ \$15.00		